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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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~ Online Sales Tax Nears ~ People Are Talking! ~ More Adamas News!
~ Napster To Make Return ~ New Mac Disk Utility! ~ A New Era for PGP!
~ Mac Mailblocks in Beta ~ Matador Takes On Spam! ~ PC TOS/PCGEM News!
~ MSN Search Beefing Up! ~ Classic Gaming Expo ~ Hormel Spam Fight!

-* Classic Gaming Expo 2003! *-
-* Backlash Predicted in Swapping War! *-
-* Committee Approves Internet Access Tax Ban *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

It's been a weird week. I had to go in to work earlier in the week for some training on our new systems that affects part of my department. It was fine, and I get to extend my vacation for those two "lost" days. The weather has been great all week, until this weekend (or so they predict!), but I'll take it! I got in some golf and a few other activities. Well, since my mind is still in vacation mode, I'll not take up any more time,

Until next time...

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Adamas 1.8 Pre-Release 23

Hello,

(7/28/2003)
Adamas 1.8 Pre-Release 23

http://draconis.atari.org

This Pre-Release is a Release-Candidate of the final version 1.8. (See list of changes for details) For installation you need an installed version 1.7, because the 1.8 files are only replacements or extensions to it.

(list of changes)
http://draconis.atari.org/draconis/archives/adachg.txt

(68000)
http://draconis.atari.org/draconis/archives/ada18dev.zip

(68030)
http://draconis.atari.org/draconis/archives/ada18d30.zip

New Marathon & FTP Release

Since today there is a new release of Marathon 2.0 Pl:8 and DRACONIS-FTP 2.0 Pl:1 available for download. Mainly it fixes the problem that DRACDLG.SLB was not correctly unloaded with MiNT/MagiC. There is an installation package and a ZIP file for a manual installation available.

(Marathon)
http://draconis.atari.org/draconis/archives/mara2.lzh
http://draconis.atari.org/draconis/archives/mara2_ni.zip

(FTP)
http://draconis.atari.org/draconis/archives/dracftp.lzh
http://draconis.atari.org/draconis/archives/dracftp_ni.zip

Best regards,
Paul CAILLET

PCTOS.LIB 0.5.0 and PCGEM.LIB 0.9.0 for PureC

Hello,

the two libraries PCTOS.LIB and PCGEM.LIB, nearly 100% compatible replacements of the PureC original libraries, are available: PCTOS 0.5.0 and PCGEM 0.9.0.

PCTOS 0.5.0
- Binding for all (X)BIOS and GEMDOS functions, PAMsNet, MiNTNet for which I have any docu
- Compatible to the PureC library PCTOSLIB.LIB (nearly 100%)

Download
MausNet: MAUS LL (++40-8192-9969999, im GPT M.C.A.Programmieren)
Internet: http://acspro.atari.org

Archives
PCTOS050.LZH 88488 Bytes 2003-07-29 20:16:48 Uhr (lib incl. src)
PCTOS050.ASC 470 Bytes 2003-07-29 20:17:24 Uhr (PGP signature)

PCGEM 0.9.0
- Binding for all VDI-Funktionen (incl. NVDI 5) for which I have any docu
- Binding for all AES-Funktionen (incl. N.AES 2.0, MagiC 6) for which I have any docu
- Multithreading save (integrated MT_AES.LIB)
- Compatible to the PureC library PCGEMLIB.LIB (nearly 100%)
- wind_get/wind_set compatible to PureC library, but without the problems of PureC for the newer modes
- Pure multithreaded Version of the library without the compatibility functions

I'm merging the library PCGEM.LIB into the GEMLIB but with a interface nearly 100% compatible to the PureC original library. This is only a step to this goal.

Download
MausNet: MAUS LL (++49-8192-9969999, im GPT M.C.A.Programmieren)
Internet: http://acspro.atari.org

Archives
PCGEM090.LZH   263997 Bytes 2003-07-29 10:04:12 Uhr (lib incl. src)
PCGEM090.ASC   470 Bytes 2003-07-29 10:05:58 Uhr (PGP signature)

Greetings

     Martin

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho, friends and neighbors. I'm going to keep it short again this week because I'm still going nuts with both home and work... Yeah, like I'm the only one that knows THAT feeling these days, right?

Anyway, I do want to mention something that struck me this past week. Don't prepare yourself for anything deep or philosophical. I'm sure that at least most of you have noticed it too, and it's not that the realization only came to me this week. But it was this week that I noticed that it wasn't getting any better. "Okay, John-Boy", you're probably saying, "What the hell are you talking about?"

Well, the subject this week, children, is intolerance. I've always known that there was intolerance in the world, and that it wasn't just in some far-away land. It's right here, right around the corner, and it always has been.

It just seemed to me that with all of our technology that we should be getting better at putting up with each other. It used to be that people with 'odd' customs were far away... so far away that you never even thought that you might actually meet. Or so far away that by the time you heard about something, it was over and done with.

Today we get news instantaneously. And we not only hear about things almost instantly, we can actually see them almost in real time. I always thought that being able to see people in the midst of a crisis or a triumph would make it real for us, make their joy or pain easier for us to identify with. To be sure, it may be hard to understand different cultures and sensibilities, but joy and sorrow are sort of universal emotions and I figured that this alone should allow us greater understanding.

Unfortunately, that ain't the case. We still project our mores and restrictions upon just about everyone we meet, see, or hear about. We see it all the time in others and decry it as small-mindedness or prejudice. In ourselves, however, it looks more like moral strength or more evolved sensibilities or even the grace of God.

The fact that I don’t understand a decision or a mindset should not mean that it’s wrong. It SHOULD serve as a reminder that the world doesn’t revolve around us (and that applies to both sides of the pond, so don’t be too quick to smirk) and that there is always more than one way to look at a situation, and usually more than one way to react.

As a general rule of thumb, I find that if someone can resolve or try to resolve a situation without resorting to violence, they deserve my respect if not my understanding. I have no problem with the intelligent application of force, but indiscriminate violence is never productive and always more expensive than it’s worth.

That’s one of my favorite phrases, by the way... "The intelligent application of force". Cool, isn’t it? It covers everything from Archimedes (give me a lever long enough and I’ll move the world) to resolving global disputes.

Even doing nothing can be an application of force. Of course, which side of Archimedes’ lever you happen to be on can color your perception of the force. And if you want to get "Zen" about it, you could even be the lever.

What does all of this mean? I have no idea, to tell you the truth. But think about how nice it would be if you didn’t have to explain to your wife why you wanted the computer where you put it, or explaining to your boss about why you’re doing what you’re doing the way you’re doing it. And once you’ve thought about that, think about the next time you make a judgement call on what someone else is doing.

Well, that’s enough of that. Let’s get on with the new, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
==========

John Garone asks about NVDI for a Hades:

"A friend needs NVDI that will run on a Hades. Anyone know where to find it?"

Steve Sweet answers simply;

"http://www.nvdi.de/gb/Produkte.html"

Alexander Beuscher adds:

"The Behne brothers seem to be out of business IMHO.

So if you want to order NVDI get in touch with atari dealers.

ASH has been the "major" NVDI dealer, so if you fail to get in touch with the Behnes or to find an atari dealer in your country, try here:

http://www.application-systems.de/nvdi/index.html

It’s german only, sorry. There is a link to the online shop and to the latest freshup If you need assistance, let me know.

If you already own a NVDI Version 5 then you can find the latest freshup (V 5.03) on the Behnes’ site as well:

http://www.nvdi.de/gb/News.html "

Joseph Place adds:

"I think NVDI may be available through Europe Shareware, but the Atari portion of the site appears to be down???

Also try 16/32 Systems."

Pascal Ricard tells Joseph:

"The PHP/MySQL servers of our ISP may have problems from time to time, sorry."

Peter West posts this about a strange mouse problem:

"Came across a strange problem when a new member brought one of his Falcons up to the club (Chesham Computer Club) this week, which I though might be helpful to others:

He had only recently bought it second-hand, and when booted off the hard drive (which had a lot of software already installed) everything worked fine at first. But as soon as you changed the screen resolution (to ST med or any other SVGA mode from the one at boot-up), the mouse refused to work. One could still move the cursor with the Alt+arrow keys, but even a substituted known-good mouse refused to work

After disabling all ACCS and AUTO apps and reinstalling them individually, the culprit turned out to be NEMESIS.PRG and/or NEM_HI.PRG. Without these all was fine. I can only presume that this was because the Nemesis board was not fitted to this machine - he wasn't sure as he has two Falcons, one of which at least has it built in. Or it could be faulty/wrongly installed, I guess.

This is a public service announcement in case anyone else finds they have a similar problem."

Derryck Croker tells Peter:

"That'll be the _Cheshunt_ Computer Club, of course.

One of the benefits of joining a computer club; you have the assembled masses to help with any problem."

Neil Chester asks for help with printing in color:

"I have a query about printing in colour on an Epson Stylus 600 Color printer I have using with PhotoTip 3.11Beta. According to the Epson manual this printer can print up to a maximum resolution of 1440x720dpi - but I have found that I cannot get the printer to print at anything like this res!

With PhotoTip and using the last NVDI (5.03) and a printer driver for the 600 it gives me the option of printing at the higher res (Best - 720 & Best - 1440) but when selected either all I get is a brief alert box flashing up on the screen "Initialising Printer" or some such, and then nothing happens!! The maximum res I can print at is Normal - 360dpi, even with

the best glossy paper in the printer.

I have a Falcon CT2b with 14Mb and 64Mb FastRAM so I thought I must have enough memory for printing at the higher resolutions?

What am I doing wrong?

Also does the "Epson GDPS_SC" scanner driver which Dennis mentioned about recently work with both the Epson GT9500 and an Atari Falcon running Magic 6.20? I know it is shareware but where can it be obtained? I am interested in using it in conjunction with PhotoTip for scanning in old non-digital photos."

Dennis Vermeire tells Neil:

"No, the Epson GDPS_SC driver doesn't work with the Falcon, it only works with a TT and Milan with SCSI card (possibly the Hades also). The driver works under TOS, MagiC and MiNT. It recognizes all the Epson GT scanners and also some (not all) of the later models.

I've found it on a now defunct German BBS.... if anyone wants a copy just drop me a mail (I've translated it in English). Although the software is shareware the author can't be found. Letters are returned and his email address doesn't exist anymore... the driver itself isn't crippled in any way.

You need minimum 128Mb RAM but to be on the safe side I would say 180Mb is even better. If you haven't got that amount of free RAM then the only option left is to use NVDI's spooler.

Check that you've set the spooler path correctly and that there is a folder called "spooler" present. Also make sure that there is at least 200MB free space on the partition where the spooler is located. Printing at 720*1440 garbles up memory....

Oh and if you have a dog, take it for a large peewee, printing an A4 in that resolution can take quite some time...."

Tony Cianfaglione asks about using a ZIP drive on his Falcon:

"What do you need to connect a Falcon and an Iomega zip drive?

I have the hardware including a scsi cable to go between them but what do I need in software? Did someone make an Iomega driver for the ST?"

Robert Schaffner tells Tony to use...

"HDDriver. Older AHDI releases do not accept SCSI IDs like, 0,1,6 so you have to use it in line: 0,1,2,.. as example.

Zip drive can only set to ID 5 or 6 if i'm not wrong.

Last point, a lot of Zip devices do not terminate SCSI bus well."

Steve Sweet adds:

"And if you're using a device such as a Link you will need to provide termpwr to the bus.

ZIP’s can be modified with a diode to achieve this."

Tony asks Steve:

"What is a link and why would I need it? The zip plugs directly into the Falcon. It just doesn’t see it right now."

Derryck Croker tells Tony:

"For a Falcon you don’t need a Link - that’s for the ST range and converts Atari’s version of SCSI to a more understandable version.

As has been said, the Zip can be set to ID 5 or 6 only, and it has its own termination via a small switch on the back.

Make sure that you’ve connected your Falcon to the correct port on the drive (the one marked "Zip") and try an external termination block if it’s the last thing in your chain) with the termination switch set to "off"."

Graham Stoneman asks about the evolution of the Atari desktop:

"Many years ago I used an Atari 520STFM, with a whopping 1Mb of RAM. A few days ago I thought I’d return to my roots, so dug it out and fired it up, but I’d forgotten how horrible the desktop was...

I remember reading in Atari magazines, adverts for a product called MagiC - it had a screenshot of a glorious high resolution, full colour desktop with lots of windows, open applications, full colour icons etc... (much like a modern Mac desktop looks like).

Now I’m guessing that those screenshots weren’t from an Atari 520ST (what with it only having a 320x200x4bit screen). What hardware and software do I need to have an Atari desktop like the ones in those adverts? Does anybody else remember them? How is it possible to have an 800x600, or even 1024x768 full colour desktop on any Atari system?"

Maurits van de Kamp tells Graham:

"Well you’re mentioning a lot of different aspects at once.

The screenshots of Magic in glorious high resolutions are usually made in MagicMac, which runs on a Mac in any resolution supported by the Mac itself.

On the ST, there’s not much you can do to achieve those resolutions. On a Falcon you can (using accelerators to increase the bus speed), or on a TT with a video card.

Furthermore, you mention the desktop itself. There are replacement desktops even for the ST, like Thing and Jinnee. Magic is mostly used with Jinnee or the default MagicDesk.

Then the looks of the GUI itself, the last versions of Magic as well as N.AES (a gem-environment for use with MiNT) support "Themes", in which you can basically control the complete look of the GUI, down to the bitmaps displayed in the window fuller/closer etc.

But anyway, for the fancy high resolutions, you’ll need to resort to more powerful Ataris (TT, Falcon, Milan, Hades), or an emulator on the PC or Mac. "

Graham tells asks Maurits:

"Thanks for the reply - would either a TT, Milan or Hades be able to run ST software (I know the Falcon often has problems).

That must have been a misleading advert I saw all those years ago then, using Mac screenshots in an Atari mag, advertising an Atari product..."

Maurits replies:

"Actually the Falcon is (supposed to be) the most ST-compatible of them all. (This is why they made the somewhat strange step backwards from the TT, with a 16-bit bus and a 16MHz processor). With cleanly written software, none of those systems has problems. As the software gets older and dirtier, the Milan/Hades, TT and Falcon will fail (in that order).

Modern Atari software should run on all those systems. Stuff like Calamus actually kinda depends on the memory and resolution possibilities of a TT or Falcon, although it should still run on a 4MB ST (barely).

It all boils down to what you want to use your Atari for. If it's all about old ST games, stick to the ST.

The German magazine "ST Computer" (of which the last issue came out a month ago, now it is a supplement in a PC magazine) does this all the time. Emulator users are considered a serious group of "Atari users"."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they're saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Sony PSP Offers Wireless Network!
'Madden' To Enter Hall of Fame!
AvP: Extinction! CGE 2003 News!
And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Sony Hand-Held PlayStation Offers Wireless Network

Sony Corp said on Tuesday its new hand-held PlayStation console would be equipped with a wireless network system which allows users within a close area to play games together and download game characters.

Sony Computer Entertainment (SCE), Sony’s game unit, mapped out technical details of the upcoming "PSP" hand-held platform, which will compete head-to-head with Nintendo Co Ltd’s dominant Game Boy Advance handheld console.

"We will be using some challenging technologies including wireless LAN," SCE President Ken Kutaragi said at a meeting of game software makers and retailers.

"The PSP is a product with huge potential, following PlayStation and PlayStation 2. The video game market may change in a big way," he said.

Kutaragi said the PSP, scheduled to debut in the fourth quarter of 2004, would employ "the latest and the most cutting-edge technologies" including two powerful micro-processors and an advanced 3D-effect graphics engine.

The new device will process data ten times faster than the original PlayStation console, SCE said.

Kutaragi also said the PSP would adopt advanced security technology which will help protect the copyright of game developers.

Sony, the dominant force in the $30 billion video game market, took industry watchers by surprise in May by unveiling its plan to launch the PSP, which features a color screen and a new high-capacity optical disc created especially for it.

The move puts Nintendo and its Game Boy hand-held platform directly in its sights, just as in 1995 when Sony first ventured into the game console business.

Sony has not set a price for the PSP, a multi-media unit that also plays movies and music, but analysts expect it to sell for 19,000 to 30,000 yen ($159-$251), well above the 12,500-yen price tag for Game Boy Advance SP, Nintendo’s smaller version of its hot-selling device launched in February.

SCE plans to start distributing PC-base software emulator tools to game developers this autumn, followed by the final hardware tool next spring, Kutaragi said.

"We plan to demonstrate our prototype version of the PSP at the E3 trade show in the United States next May, and a software line-up at the Tokyo Game Show, ahead of the worldwide launch in the fourth quarter of 2004," Kutaragi said.

’Madden’ Video Game to Enter Hall of Fame

John Madden may have been legendary as a professional football coach, but it took the cover of a video game to put him in the sport’s greatest shrine.

The Pro Football Hall of Fame said on Tuesday it will honor the "Madden NFL Football" video game at its facility in Canton, Ohio, with an exhibit that chronicles its history while letting fans play along.

"It’s an exhibit with Madden Football, with PlayStations (game consoles)

in it, with a brief history of the development of the game itself," Hall spokesman Joe Horrigan told Reuters.

The "Madden NFL Football" series has sold more than 30 million copies in various incarnations over the last 14 years, and has become a guaranteed best seller for its publisher, Electronic Arts Inc. The latest version of the games, "Madden NFL Football 2004," is due to be released next month.

The former Oakland Raiders coach and current TV commentator is involved with the video game’s development every year, consulting on design and content.

While Madden is not a Hall of Fame member, he was honored last year with the Pete Rozelle Radio and Television Award for broadcasting. Madden’s attention to linemen and the dirty work of blocking and tackling - in contrast to the flash and dash of running backs and quarterbacks - has proven a hit with fans.

In his coaching days, Madden led the Raiders to victory in Super Bowl XI in 1977.

The Hall of Fame exhibit will open this Saturday, Horrigan said.

Aliens vs. Predator: Extinction

It really seemed as if the Aliens vs. Predator franchise would escape the curse that plagues most movie licensed games. The original SNES game was a decent action platformer, and the Atari Jaguar incarnation was one of the only good titles for that system. On PC, Aliens vs. Predator spawned two excellent first-person shooters, which were absolutely drenched in atmosphere. So when EA announced it was publishing a new Aliens vs. Predator game - a real-time strategy title, no less! - we were intrigued. Would it work? Sadly, no.

On paper, an Aliens vs. Predator RTS sounds like a great idea - no one could argue that one of the world’s best-selling strategy games, Starcraft, was heavily inspired by the franchise. Had Extinction shipped with the same kind of polish that characterized Starcraft, it would have been a must-have game. But it hasn’t. The game mechanics are so badly crippled that it probably doesn’t even deserve to be called a strategy game.

The core problem with Extinction is the unit control. Now, granted, consoles can never offer the fine level of control that players will find on PC, but an RTS game should emphasize easy unit management no matter what platform it’s on. Extinction fails miserably in this regard.

Selecting a single unit is challenge enough, especially when they are moving, but trying to get a distinct group can be a nightmare. To select a group, you hold down the selection button on one unit, and then a circle will expand out and "lasso" everything in close proximity. Don’t even bother trying to add units individually... you’ll drive yourself crazy. Oh, and micromanagement during a battle? An exercise in futility.

Unit AI is little better. Players can tell their units to act defensively or aggressively, however, this has barely any effect on the outcome of battles. Moving characters from one section of the map to another can also be a problem. When in motion, your units will ignore most attackers,

preferring to keep walking like mindless zombies and simply take damage. And units that are too far back will simply sit there, instead of walking forward to join the battle. Braindead doesn’t even begin to describe it.

To make up for the poor control system and the utter lack of AI, the developers decided to balance the play system by making it easy to acquire new units. Unfortunately, this band-aid style approach did nothing to help the game, instead killing what little semblance of strategy Extinction had left.

Because of the inherent flaws in the game design, the best way to play Extinction is cannon fodder style - build up a large force and send it at the enemy. As your forces thin due to attrition, simply order up more of them. While it is cool the first time you send a massive legion of space marines into battle against hordes of acid-blooded Aliens, the tactic quickly becomes boring.

Viewing the bestiary, it is easy to see that a lot of work went into the character models. Not only are they detailed and well animated, all of the new units feature full profiles - something that is sure to please the hardcore fans. Oddly, those highly detailed character models are only found in the bestiary, as the main game units are small and easily confused. Often the only way to identify a character in a group is to highlight it and see what name pops up on the screen.

With 21 levels to complete (seven per race), Extinction feels a mite rushed, and due to the simplistic nature of the mission design, most players should be able to walk through them rather quickly. Zono made an attempt at telling a story, but it is little more than a shell. The levels do not tie together in any meaningful way and the in-mission updates are mere alerts that tell you what to do next. About the only positive aspect is the excellent artwork that displays on the screen next to a mission briefing.

If Extinction was ported to PC and given a complete overhaul - a brand new AI system and expertly designed levels - it could make one hell of a game. After all, the premise is rock solid, only the execution killed this one. Maybe Aliens vs. Predator fans will get some mild enjoyment out of it, but once you remove the license, there is little worth noting.

Released:
29/07/03
Platform:
Xbox
Price:
$39.99, 39.99

Pros:
Based on a great franchise
Good character profiles

Cons:
Frustrating controls
Poor in-game visuals
Lack of depth
Terrible AI

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Last Reminder for Classic Gaming Expo 2003

Hi All!

Just a little more than a week until Classic Gaming Expo 2003 and it's really shaping up to to be a great show.

Our sponsors, exhibitors and distinguished guests have really shown an outpouring of support. Attached are sheets detailing these groups as they stand right now. I think you'll agree we have a real class-A list of supporters.

In case you have not been monitoring http://www.cgexpo.com/, I wanted to let you know that CG Expo will also the debut of several classic video game related products, including Intellivision Productions new Intellivision 10 and Intellivision 25 units that plug directly into the TV and allow players to relive those great Intellivision games.

In addition there will be over 50 arcade games set for free play and tournaments and contests of all sorts.

It is my sincere hope that I'll see many of you at the show and we can share the love of classic games.

Jayson Hill
Director of Media Relations
Classic Gaming Expo 2003
(978) 922-1059
media@cgexpo.com

CLASSIC GAMING EXPO 2003
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS & SPEAKERS

MR. KARL ANDERSON
Atari coin-op programmer on pre-Firefox laserdisc-based games like The Last Starfighter.

DR. ROBERT BROWN
Bob was one of the founders of the Atari consumer division. He directed the development of the Atari 2600 and the first 25 games. He also founded Starpath which produced the Supercharger and 12 cassette based games.

MR. STEVE CARTWRIGHT Activision designer responsible for the Atari VCS games Megamania, Barnstorming, Plaque Attack, Frostbite and Seaquest.

MR. GARTH CLOWES Founder of Entex Industries, makers of numerous handheld games as well as the highly sought after Adventurevision console.

MR. DAVID CRANE Co-founder of Activision in 1979, where he designed such classics as Pitfall!, Dragster, Decathlon, Fishing Derby, Freeway and Ghostbusters.

MR. DON DAGLOW Designed and programmed the Intellivision game Utopia (the first sim game) before being named director of software development for Mattel. He later co-designed Earl Weaver Baseball at EA and Neverwinter Nights (the first online graphic RPG) for AOL. In 1988 he founded Stormfront Studios, which recently created The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers for EA, based on the film from New Line Cinema.

MR. WARREN DAVIS Best known for the arcade hit Q*Bert while at Gottlieb, Warren was also responsible for Joust 2 and Us vs. Them.

MR. BRAD FREGGER The first computer games producer at Activision (possibly the world, for that matter) and the producer for games designed by David Crane, Alan Miller, and Steve Cartwright. Additionally, he was the producer who discovered Shanghai, is directly involved in the history of Tetris, and is the inventor of Computer Card Solitaire.

MR. ANDREW FUCHS Andrew joined Atari in 1981 where he was a sound designer and software engineer for dozens of 2600 and 5200 games. He also designed several sound editors for the Atari 800.

MR. JOHN HARRIS Developed Jawbreaker, Frogger, Mouskattack for the Atari 8-bit line of computers and Jawbreaker for the Atari VCS.

MR. KEITHEN HAYENGA Atari 5200 game designer best known for incorporating speech in RealSports Baseball at a time when most home games required a separate voice synthesizer add-on.

MR. MATTHEW HUBBARD Designed Submarine Commander and Double Dunk for Atari and popular Dolphin for Activision. Also created Activision’s Zenji for the Atari 400/800.

MR. JIM HUETHER Designed Atari 2600 classics Flag Capture, Sky Diver and the Sears exclusive Steeplechase, is credited with the co-design of RealSports Volleyball, designed RealSports Football and Xevious for the Atari 5200 SuperSystem and published many games with Epyx and Sega including The Sporting News Baseball, California Games II, the StreetSports series, Cartoon Maker, Joe Montana Football, Castle of Illusion starring Mickey Mouse and many more.

MR. ARNIE KATZ Co-founder of Electronic Games Magazine, the first and most popular publication devoted strictly to electronic entertainment.

MR. JOE KING Created the graphics for the Intellivision games Motocross, Loco-Motion and Space Shuttle, and co-designed Magic Carousel and Hover Force.

MR. GARRY KITCHEN Creator of Space Jockey, Keystone Kapers and Pressure Cooker for the Atari 2600. For the Commodore 64 computer, he wrote The Designer’s Pencil and Garry Kitchen’s Gamemaker.

MR. DAN KRAMER Worked in the hardware division of Atari in the early 1980’s. Best known for designing the Atari 2600 and 5200 Trak-Ball controllers.

MR. BILL KUNKLE Co-founder of Electronic Games Magazine, the first and most popular publication devoted strictly to electronic entertainment.

MR. FRANZ LANZINGER Programmed & Designed the incredible Crystal Castles arcade game as well as numerous other titles for various consoles. Franz was the world record holder for Centipede in 1981 and is currently the Chairman of Actual Entertainment.

MR. MARK LESSER This is the man responsible for the handheld Mattel Football and Mattel Baseball, and he's credited with numerous other Mattel handhelds. He also designed the Atari 2600 games Frogger II and Lord of the Rings and enjoyed further success for Electronic Arts developing for the Sega Genesis platform with John Madden '93 and the NHL Hockey series from '94 to '97.

MR. RICK LEVINE Mattel programmer with PBA Bowling to his credit. After moving on to Imagic, Rick designed and programmed both Microsurgeon and Truckin'.

MR. ALAN MILLER Alan Miller wrote several 2600 games for Atari before co-founding Activision where he authored such classics as Checkers, Tennis, Ice Hockey, Starmaster, and Robot Tank.

MR. BOB NEWSTADT Designed Pinball for Intellivision.

MR. PAUL NORMAN Best known for his work at Cosmi from 1982 through 1989. His hits included Forbidden Forest, Aztec Challenge, Caverns of Khaftka, Super Huey Helicopter, Beyond the Forbidden Forest, Huey II, Def Con 5, Navy Seal, and The President Is Missing. Since then he has been involved in numerous, diverse gaming projects.

MS. KAREN NUGENT A talented artist who designed the graphics for BurgerTime, Super Pro Football, Mission X, Scooby Doo's Maze Chase and Flintstone's Keyboard Fun. Currently with Disney, working on animated feature films.

MR. BOB POLARO Responsible for the Atari computer hit Lemonade Stand as well as such 2600 classics as Defender, RealSports Volleyball, Desert Falcon, Road Runner, Rampage and Sprintmaster.

MR. MARK RICHARDS The original host of Starcade, cable television's first original TV game show featuring arcade games. Mark hosted the first 26 weeks of the series that aired on Ted Turner's WTBS from December 1982 through June 1983.

MR. KEITH ROBINSON Intellivision programmer while at Mattel Electronics and designer of TRON Solar Sailer for the system. Co-founder of Intellivision Productions, makers of "Intellivision Lives!," a CD-ROM compilation of the original games for play on the PC and Mac.

MR. STEPHEN RONEY Co-designed and co-programmed the Intellivoice games Space Spartans, B-17 Bomber and Space Shuttle, designed and programmed the unreleased Intellivision game Hypnotic Lights and programmed the Aquarius version of Utopia.

MR. ED ROTBERG Best known for his work with both Atari and Sente's coin-op division, he designed Atari Baseball and Battlezone during his first stint with Atari, then Snake Pit, Goalie Ghost, and Hat Trick with Sente. He later returned to Atari to design S.T.U.N. Runner and Blasteroids and co-design Steel Talons with Ed Logg.

MR. TIM SKELLY Vector graphics arcade game extraordinaire while working

for Cinematronics. Created Star Hawk, Warrior, Rip-Off, Sundance, Armor Attack and Star Castle. Also designed Reactor for Gottlieb.

MR. TOM SLOPER Designed Spike and Bedlam for the Vectrex, Mechwarrior for the SNES, Blast Chamber for Playstation, the NES Ghostbusters series, and many more.

MR. JAY SMITH Founder of Smith Engineering, where he was the mastermind behind the Vectrex, a cartridge-based game system which featured a 9-inch vectorscan display. Founder and CEO of Adrenalin Interactive, Inc.

MR. ROBERT G. SMITH Created Video Pinball while at Atari and Star Voyager, Riddle of the Sphinx, Dragonfire, and Moonsweeper for the Atari 2600 while at Imagic. Also programmed Star Wars: The Arcade Game (2600) for Parker Brothers.

MR. DAVID STIFEL Intellivision programer at Mattel Electronics, where he programmed the 1983 Intellivision Demonstration Cartridge. His next assignment was Game Factory, on the ECS component, which he completed literally on the final day Mattel Electronics shut its dooors for good.

MR. DAVE WARHOL David worked with other "Blue Sky Rangers" at Mattel Electronics, designing and writing Mind Strike, co-writing Thunder Castle, and contributing to the music and sounds of a number of other games. He went on to found Real time Associates, which produced all of the 25+ post-Mattel INTV series of games with other ex-Mattel alumni. His music and audio can also be found in C64, Atari 400/800, Apple II, and Amiga products.

MR. HOWARD SCOTT WARSHAW Atari 2600 game programmer/designer who produced Yar’s Revenge, Raiders of the Lost Ark and E.T. The Extra Terrestrial.

MR. BILL WENTWORTH Although Bill doesn’t like to brag about his skills, he is a true graphics genius. Bill has almost 20 years of experience in the graphic design field and has inked some of the best game covers around including numerous titles for Absolute Entertainment. He is currently the Vice President of Creative Development at Skyworks Technologies. MR. STEVE WOITA Designer of Taz, Asterix and Quadrun for the Atari 2600, Kid Chameleon and Sonic Spinball (Genesis) and Waterworld (Virtual Boy).

MS. JOYCE WORLEY Co-founder of Electronic Games Magazine, and concurrently published Electronic Games Hotline, a bi-weekly newsletter which covered the latest news surrounding the hobby.

MR. ROB ZDYBEL Rob is one of the great programmers of our time. Starting with his work on the Atari VCS which included such hits as Realsports Football for Atari and Star Trek for Sega, Rob maintained the highest standards in game development. He later wrote the Operating System for the Atari 5200 and programmed that system’s version of Missile Command. Rob continued working on various Atari systems over the years (he even did Lynx software) and is now one of the finest programmers at 3DO.

CONTEMPORARY GUESTS & MODERATORS

MR. LEONARD HERMAN Videogame historian, freelance writer and author of Phoenix: The Fall And Rise Of Videogames and ABC To The VCS.

MR. ZACH MESTON A videogame journalist for over ten years, Zach writes for dozens of different publications and Web pages. He has also written

over 40 strategy guides.

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The Bio-degradable Source for Videogamers. DP has been producing a bi-monthly video game publication since 1991 and is the publisher of the Classic Video Game Collector's Guide. Digital Press is also CGE's host for Classic Video Game Jeopardy and a few new event surprises this year.
www.digitpress.com

DKAtari
During the early 1980's, Dan Kramer was a member of Atari's consumer hardware engineering staff, designing Trak-Balls for the 2600 and 5200 plus providing trade show technical support. He recently has launched his web site at www.dkatari.com, which features rare prototypes and images, unusual sale items and amazing tall tales of his adventures within Atari's walls.
www.dkatari.com

Fresno Commodore Users Group
Robert Bernardo will be on-hand from the Fresno Commodore user group promoting the illustrious history of Commodore and showing off some interesting Commodore items.

The GameTrader
The GameTrader opened its first retail store in 1999, and now has six stores in two states and plans for further expansion. In addition to providing the same products and services as gameswitch.com Web site, our stores also have regular monthly game tournaments and large selections of

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The developers of Home Arcade Classics, a full-sized home arcade machine, both upright and cocktail units with 10 classic game titles pre-installed (Defender, Joust, Root Beer Tapper, Sinistar, Centipede, Millipede, Rally-X, Gorf, Bubbles, and Toobin').

Individual Computers
The company from Germany is the production partner of the C-One project, and also has some things in the pure gaming sector to show: The 4-player adapter for the C64, a controller for today's PC's that allow you read the old, original C64 disks, and use of digital joysticks on a PCI-based computer. A perfect emulation tool! The just-released 10MBit networking card for the C64 enables patches of classic games to run in a networking environment. It shows that a 1Mhz classic machine has enough power to compete with today's LAN games! Well, fun-wise.
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Las Vegas Pinball Collector's Club
Tim Arnold hosts a raffle to benefit the Las Vegas Salvation Army. Grand Prize is a full-size arcade machine including shipping in the U.S. Additional prizes include loads of arcade flyers and other products to be won throughout the day.

Lost Levels
Lost Levels is a new, not-for-profit gaming magazine making its debut at this year's show. This gang of miscreants will have a plethora of newly-discovered, unreleased games available for free play, as well as hundreds of NES games for sale and a prize raffle with prizes including authentic prototype cartridges!
www.lostlevels.org

Malinche Entertainment
Game designer Howard Sherman will have his new title Pentari: First Light available, an epic text adventure game in the grand Infocom tradition awaits you. Interactive Fiction makes its triumphant return to the commercial game market!
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NeoGeoFreak
Since 1996, Dion Dakis and Chris Ray have been recognized as the only true world authority for anything relating to the NeoGeo (games, collectibles, and history). The NeoGeoFreak booth will be displaying rare and one-of-a-kind collectibles for fans to see and photograph along with original game artworks, concept art, prototype units, as well as a large inventory of games, magazines, mooks, posters, and collectibles. They will also be debuting an unreleased "lost game," to be seen to most for the first time ever. Free game play and give-aways, along with a raffle will be part of the NeoGeoFreak Festivities.
www.neogeofreak.com

Cassidy Nolen
Cassidy is an independent collector and arcade game aficionado who will have some surprises for CGE guests.

Northwest Classic Games Enthusiasts (NWCGE)
Rick Weis, Hans Reutter, and Lee Krueger will be promoting their Northwest Classic Gaming Enthusiasts collector’s group and future events.
www.nwcge.org

1-Up Zine
1-Up is the zine about video game culture: personal stories and comics about triumph and defeat, losing quarters, and staying up late. Content ranges from interviews with the Minibosses and Billy Mitchell, a comic about a Pac Man addicted mom, and a feminist reading of Um Jammer Lammy. 1-Up is been distributed internationally and has been featured in The Face, G4 Media, XLR8R, Giant Robot, Xbox Nation, and Official Playstation Magazine. The mammoth 100 page third issue even includes a hand-silkscreened video game trading card!
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www.selectsoftusa.com

Songbird Productions
Songbird Productions was founded in 1999 by well-known Atari fan and hobby developer Carl Forhan to develop and publish games for all Atari consoles, from the 2600 to the Jaguar. Carl does develop directly for the Lynx and Jaguar and a primary emphasis of Songbird Productions is to finish up those games and get them out the door and into consumers' hands. However, equally important is the opportunity to work with other hobby developers, who may have the skill to develop a beta-quality game but need some help in certain areas (audio, graphics, playtest, etc.) or even a release-quality game, but don't have the contacts or funds necessary to get a game published for an Atari system. Songbird Productions has the skills and contacts necessary to release games for virtually any Atari console.
songbird-productions.com
1736 Chippewa Drive NW
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Ubi Soft Entertainment

Ubi Soft was formed in 1990 in Montreuil, France as a small developer but quickly caught the eye of the industry in 1994 with the release of their game Rayman, a technological wonder with superb play mechanics and - gasp - a personality! In 1996 they teamed up with several large publishers, including Warner Brothers Interactive (on Batman) and Disney (on Donald Duck, Jungle Book and others) and by 2000 had created a legacy all their own. They further acquired Red Storm (who is best known for their Tom Clancy book-to-game translations), TLC GAME Studios, and Blue Byte Software. It seems the best is yet to come with Ubi Soft, who proves to be a stronger presence year after year. We took note all over again when they produced Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell, a remarkable game in many areas, from attention to detail to outright graphic mastery.
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Published by L.F.P. Inc., Tips & Tricks was founded in 1994 as a specialized publication for video-game enthusiasts who want more game-specific information than anything else. Unlike most mainstream video-game magazines, Tips & Tricks doesn't concentrate on game reviews, industry news, gossip or rumors. Instead, its goal is to help players get more out of the video games they've bought or are thinking about buying.
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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Backlash Predicted in File-Swapping Wars

Responding to the music industry's threats of legal action against a mass of individual P2P users, the Electronic Frontier Foundation has created a Web page where users can check to see if they are being targeted by the RIAA, the industry trade group bringing the suits. The EFF's Web page enables users to check for their user names before a subpoena reaches them. At least two ISPs say that if a user responds within seven days, the ISP can deny the RIAA's subpoena and refuse to turn over personal contact information.

The move by the EFF followed a new offensive by the RIAA; the group has sent out over 900 subpoenas to ISPs since July 26th to gain the information necessary to file civil lawsuits against individual file swappers.

Although some industry observers say the RIAA's targeting of individuals will create a backlash, RIAA spokesperson Jonathan Lamy told NewsFactor the group's efforts are working. "If you look at the lawsuits we filed against four college students who were running mini-Napster networks, within days of that announcement nearly two dozen similar networks across the country came down."

But Yankee Group analyst Mike Goodman told NewsFactor that "this is going to make a lot of people unhappy. And who do you think these people will turn to? Their congressman. At that point, all the PAC [political action committee] money in the world won't save you.

"I would love to see the first time a senator's or a congressman's kid gets a subpoena," Goodman said.

At the EFF site, users can enter their file-sharing moniker to see if they are being subpoenaed. The site queries a database that includes a list of subpoenas filed in the Washington, D.C., district court.

If an individual's moniker is in the database, that does not necessarily mean they are being subpoenaed. Many file-sharing nicknames are used by more than one person.

For each nickname used, the EFF lists a link to the PDF file of the subpoena. This includes the ISP name, the IP address of the individual, and the list of songs an individual has distributed.

For those individuals involved, the Subpoena Defense Alliance lists attorneys and additional legal information.

The RIAA's new wave of subpoenas is intended to target heavy P2P users, according to the trade group. But what precisely constitutes a heavy user is unclear.

Experts say the action is most likely to target users who have a T-1 connection, keep their systems on continuously, and share thousands of files. Also most likely to be targeted are supernode P2P users, individuals whose systems are used as major network connection points for services like Kazaa.

Although such users are most commonly found in universities, any user with a high-speed connection may fit these profiles.

The RIAA will begin filing these suits in late August or early September, coinciding with the start of the new school year. As for the penalty, "we'll leave it up to the court to decide" dollar amounts, RIAA's Lamy said.

The RIAA’s court filings show the organization is likely to use snapshots of a P2P user’s shared file folder as evidence in lawsuits.

Under the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act, a copyright owner can issue a subpoena to force an ISP to turn over the name of suspected copyright infringer.

Verizon, an ISP, has been attempting to overturn this law. Verizon, along with another ISP, SBC Communications, has informed users that they seven days to challenge a subpoena. If the ISP does not hear from the user’s attorney in that seven-day period, it will turn over the information to the RIAA.

"This is one of those wars where they’re going to win every battle and lose the war," Goodman said of the RIAA’s efforts to combat P2P piracy. "P2P networks are like cockroaches. As soon as you eliminate one, a dozen new ones come scurrying forth."

As an alternative to legal action, Goodman said that digital rights management [DRM] software could be used to create files to be posted on P2P networks that would create profit for the music industry. Users would pay for such files because they are virus free and clearly labeled, he said.

He pointed to Altnet, which runs in conjunction with the Kazaa network and charges fees to downloaders. As of two months ago, "they were doing about two million licenses a month, and about a third of them are paid," Goodman said.

Napster 2.0 Ready for Holiday Relaunch

Napster is set to rise like a phoenix from the ashes this Christmas holiday season, but this time with its legal affairs in check, Napster owner Roxio said Monday.

The fallen song-swapping service, which was knocked offline last year after a prolonged legal battle with the record industry over copyright infringement allegations, will re-emerge as a legal paid music service Napster 2.0.

At launch, the new Napster will boast access to up to 500,000 tracks through individual download, or through a monthly subscription to Internet radio, Roxio said.

The service will be offering its music content through deals with all five major record labels and a variety of independent labels, Roxio said, in stark contrast to the service’s freewheeling days when it offered users the ability to trade their music for free.

Santa Clara, California-based Roxio has been laying the groundwork for a Napster relaunch since it bought the service’s remaining assets late last year.

Since then, it scooped up online music subscription service Pressplay for $39.5 million and added eLabs president and music veteran Larry Kenswil to its board. ELabs is the new-media and technologies division of Vivendi Universal’s Universal Music Group.

Roxio Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Chris Gorog said in a release that the early prototypes of Napster 2.0 are progressing well and that more details of the service will be revealed closer to launch. Gorog was due to speak further on the company's Napster strategy in a keynote address at Jupiter Research's Plug.In digital music conference in New York later Monday.

Napster 2.0 will be available at Napster.com. The Jupiter Plug.In conference takes place Monday and Tuesday in New York City.

Mac Version of New E-mail Service Now in beta

Monday Mailblocks launched a beta Mac version of its spam-free, Web-based e-mail service called Challenge/Response 2.0. A free, 30-day trial of the beta software is available for downloading and test driving.

Mailblocks launched four months ago with the goal of eliminating spam, overcoming the small storage space and attachment quotas of e-mail services, and increasing the speed of e-mail use. Though broadband is all the rage, most people still have dial-up connections, said Mailblocks CEO Phil Goldman, a veteran of such companies as Apple, General Magic, and WebTV.

"Before we started the company, we looked around and saw there were a lot of great Internet services available, such as Google for searching and Amazon.com for e-commerce," he told MacCentral. "However, no one seemed to be doing a really good job on e-mail. My professional opinion was: they all stink and never seem to get any better. In fact, with the onslaught of spam they seem to be getting worse. So our modest goal was to create the world's greatest e-mail service."

Mailblocks' challenge/response technology uses a blend of automated technology and human involvement to stop spam. E-mails sent from new people who aren't in your address book are put in a "Pending" folder and automatically sent a request to authenticate (called a "challenge"). Machine-generated e-mail can't reply to the challenge e-mail, so spam doesn't reach your in-box. New users can respond once to a challenge in order to be recognized in the future. The only e-mail that you see is from recognized correspondents or new contacts who respond to the challenge e-mail.

Challenge/Response is compatible with Mac OS X (using Safari 1.0 and Internet Explorer) and Mac OS 9.2 (using Internet Explorer).

"We've done a tremendous amount of work to make our e-mail service work with these browsers," Goldman said. "We've really had to get up close and personal with them. We're certainly Safari experts now. We know exactly what Apple's browser is and what it does best."

You can use the Mailblocks service to consolidate existing Yahoo!Mail, AOL, Hotmail and POP3 accounts into one Universal Inbox. Mailblocks provides 6MB attachment capacity and offers e-mail access from an application-like Web interface - or through Microsoft Outlook, Outlook Express, Eudora, or Apple's Mail. This means you can keep your current e-mail addresses.

When consolidating multiple accounts, you can choose to "Reply From" your

Mailblocks address or any vanity domain you own. Plus, you can read all your e-mail with your preferred e-mail client or through a Web browser. You can switch back and forth between the two methods if you wish.

Mailblocks with Challenge/Response 2.0 automates the challenge/response process. New senders to Mailblocks' subscribers are no longer challenged on an ongoing basis. Unless a sender begins sending spam, they will never be challenged again, Goldman said. Challenge/Response 2.0 incorporates a patent-pending technique to verify humans and allows "trusted senders" to send e-mail without being challenged.

Challenge/Response 2.0 includes additional capabilities to:

* Customize Challenge messages with personalized text;

* Automatically correct false positives from external accounts (caused by inaccurate anti-spam techniques used in Hotmail, Yahoo! and AOL when mail is consolidated in a Mailblocks account);

* Set mail policies for auto-deletion in the Pending folder, eliminating the need to manually manage unconfirmed e-mail and leaving more room for e-mail you want.

Challenge/Response gets rid of 100 percent of spam and offers an "ultra-fast user experience," Goldman said.

"We're faster on dial-up than other e-mail services are over broadband," he said. "We're focused on innovation and that's why we wanted to make sure that the Mac community is involved, because Apple is all about innovation."

Goldman said the Mac beta program will end in late summer, when the finished, fully-qualified version of the Mailblocks service will be made available to Mac users for standard pricing of US$9.95 per year with 12MB of storage or $24.95 per year for 50MB of storage. You can sign up for a free trial online.

Matador Takes Spam By The Horns

MailFrontier released Matador 3.0, a desktop anti-spam product that increases in accuracy over time and stops spam from invading wireless devices.

Spam has gotten more deceptive, dangerous and invasive with pop-ups, spyware and other malicious code. Consequently, Matador 3.0 monitors incoming e-mail and analyzes each message to learn more about specific patterns and vocabulary that distinguish good and bad e-mail. The software creates a custom rule set for each individual user, which adapts over time, according to the Palo Alto, Calif.-based vendor.

Spammers also increasingly use Windows Messenger Service to send pop-ups, blocking users' screens and often spamming them with offers to eliminate pop-up spam. MailFrontier said that version 3.0 prevents that invasion. In addition, Outlook users can also filter incoming e-mail before it gets downloaded to a wireless device.

Matador costs $29.95 and is available now. A free trial download is available at http://www.mailfrontier.com.

A New Era for PGP

Years after the federal government dropped its investigation of him for trying to export his pioneering Pretty Good Privacy encryption software, Phil Zimmermann still has no love for the folks in Washington. Nor is he very happy with his former colleagues at Network Associates Inc.

In his keynote speech on the first day of the Black Hat Briefings here Wednesday, Zimmermann ripped NAI for all but shelving PGP after the security conglomerate bought Zimmermann's company in the late 1990s.

"I used to get a lot of e-mails from people worried that PGP would fall into the wrong hands. It did fall into the wrong hands at Network Associates," Zimmermann said, drawing a big laugh from the assembled group of hackers, security specialists, crypto enthusiasts and law enforcement officers in the audience. "Why do you laugh when I mention NAI? I see this is a knowledgeable crowd. That was a dark chapter in PGP's history. But the dark times are over."

PGP Corp., a new company formed last year, now sells the commercial version of PGP. Zimmermann began work on the encryption software in the mid-1980s as a human rights project. He was looking for a way to help activists in countries under oppressive regimes to protect their electronic communications. Over the years, he has been contacted by numerous people who have described how the use of PGP helped save their lives or the lives of others.

But at the same time, the government decided that Zimmermann's software was too dangerous to be exported and opened an investigation into whether he had violated the Arms Control Export Act when he uploaded it to the Internet. Prosecutors maintained that criminals and terrorists would use PGP to defeat government eavesdropping efforts, which outweighed the potential good the software might do.

Zimmermann, and many thousands of his supporters, disagreed. However, he readily admits that PGP has in fact been used by criminals.

"That was the central question of the debate during the 1990s. We came to a decision that society is better off with crypto," Zimmermann said. "I wish criminals and terrorists didn't use crypto, and specifically I wish they didn't use PGP, but they do. You have to look at the big picture. It's saved lives around the world. It's a decision we made with our eyes open."

Responding to a question about whether the government's policy on allowing the use and export of strong encryption might change now that it has become ubiquitous, Zimmermann said no, but warned that there could be other scenarios on the horizon that are just as troubling.

"We might see some effort by the government to force you to give up your private key if you are the target of a criminal investigation," he said. "But I would submit that under stress you might forget your passphrase."

Zimmermann also had a direct message for the government representatives in the audience. "A lot of you in the audience work for the federal government, or so I'm told. Let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater when it comes to the erosion of our civil rights. We have seen

the worst erosion of our civil rights in the last two years," he said, drawing a loud round of applause.

Microsoft Takes Sides on Search

Microsoft is beefing up its MSN search engine to go head-to-head with Google, but at the same time has no immediate plans to cancel its agreement for paid search listings with Overture Services, which was recently bought by MSN rival Yahoo.

"MSN Search falls into the category of our [key] businesses," said Lisa Gurry, group product manager for MSN in an interview at Microsoft's Redmond, Washington, headquarters on Friday. "We are working on building our own search engine from scratch."

While seeking to compete aggressively with Google, Microsoft appears to be taking a different tack with Sunnyvale, California-based Yahoo. Microsoft, for now, continues to use technology from Yahoo-owned Inktomi for MSN Search and has no plans to pull its agreement with Overture for paid search listings on MSN Search.

In fact, Microsoft appears to be following a course for its commercial search technology that is similar to its plans for its Web search engine. For now the software titan will work with Overture, but in the long term it could develop its own paid listings technology, said Yusuf Mehdi, the head of Microsoft's MSN Personal Services and Business division, at Microsoft's financial analyst meeting on Thursday.

Yahoo announced an agreement to buy Overture of Pasadena, California, earlier this month.

Some of Microsoft's work in Web search has already been noted by Web site owners, who have spotted an "MSN bot" indexing their sites. However, the MSN Search project is far from done, according to Gurry, who did not detail when the new MSN Search should hit the Web.

"This is not a short-term project, it is a pretty extensive project," she said. "It is a strategic area for the [MSN] group; and we are increasing the number of employees in that area, far greater than in any other group in MSN."

Microsoft believes Web search can be done much better than any search engine does it today. "Our research indicates that only 30 percent to 40 percent of the Web is indexed and that people's questions [to search engines] go unanswered half the time," Gurry said.

Analysts with San Francisco-based investment bank SoundView Technology Group earlier this year were among the first to report on Microsoft's increased investment in Web search.

Xtar Lets You Clone, Back Up Mac OS X Disks

Helios Software GmbH has released HELIOS Xtar for Mac OS X, a free utility that can be used to clone a Mac OS X system disk for backing up and

restoring disks, files and folders - all with full HFS (Mac OS Standard) support.

The HFS disk format stores data and meta-data (such as the Finder and Resource info) within one file, standard Unix applications can only see the data part, and the Resource information is lost using standard Unix, according to Helios. The result? Copies will be incomplete and some operations - booting, previewing from EPSF files, applications detecting their own files, etc. - won't work.

Xtar saves each HFS file as two files in a container format that preserves all special attributes and additional data. During a restore with "Xtar" on an HFS volume, the resource and finder information are restored into valid HFS files containing all information. This means there is no missing data, and the volume is bootable after being restored.

Xtar can be scripted to allow you to: clone a Mac OS X system disk, backup/restore a disk, and backup/restore files and folders. It also allows for the duplication of Mac OS X HFS bootable disks.

Legislatures Move Closer To Online Sales Tax Collection

A system that will let states collect sales tax from online purchasers should become operational next year. More than enough state legislatures have passed laws this year to implement the Streamlined Sales Tax Project, said Dianne Hardt, project co-chair and Wisconsin's tax administrator, at a briefing Tuesday.

Legislatures in 20 states, representing about a third of the population of the 41 states participating in the project, have enacted laws to conform with provisions of the tax-collection program. An agreement approved by the states' tax officials last year calls for execution of the sales-tax collection system once 10 states representing 20% of the population of sales-tax-collecting states approve the project.

Though that threshold has been reached, Hardt said, it will take months to verify if each state's law conforms with project standards. She expects the program to become effective either April 1 or July 1.

Many online businesses don't collect sales tax from buyers who live in states where the companies aren't based. Legally, buyers are required to pay a sales tax, known as a use tax, to the state in which they reside, but few do so unless sellers collect the levies. States lose an estimated $200 million a year in uncollected sales taxes from online purchases. The system devised by Streamlined Sales Tax Project establishes processes in which the taxes are collected and distributed to the states.

Businesses have three choices of the technology they can use to collect and disperse sales tax: contract with a project-certified service provider, purchase and deploy project-certified software, or have tax authorities certify a homegrown system.

States participating in the project must agree to the same definitions for taxed items. For instance, fruit juice is defined as a beverage containing at least 50% or more fruit juice. Wisconsin exempts fruit juices only if they contain 100% fruit juice. If the state wants to participate in the project, it would have to agree to exempt fruit juice as defined by the

project. Having a single definition for an item makes it easier for businesses serving customers in multiple states to know what to tax.

Though the project has defined for tax purposes most commodities and services, it’s still working out definitions for digital property such as downloaded music.

Hardt said businesses will benefit once the tax-collection mechanisms take effect because it will simplify the tax structure, provide greater accuracy for tax calculations, indemnify business from errors, and reduce the scope of potential audits. Because of these benefits, Hardt said, "the business community will put pressure on states that aren’t participating to participate."

Senate Committee Approves Internet Tax Ban

The U.S. Senate Commerce Committee on Thursday toughened an existing ban on Internet access taxes by voting to make it permanent and requiring nine states to repeal existing taxes on access fees.

The measure would make permanent a ban on the access taxes currently due to expire in November, and would require states that have existing taxes in place to remove them within three years.

Access taxes - levied on the monthly fees Internet users pay to providers like EarthLink Inc. - have been prohibited under a temporary ban since 1998, but nine states who had such taxes in place before the ban was enacted are currently allowed to keep them.

The nine states - New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin - take in between $3.6 million and $45 million each year from such taxes.

The committee also extended the ban to include all forms of Internet access, closing a loophole that Internet businesses had feared could be used to tax wireless and high-speed service.

The House of Representatives Judiciary Committee approved a similar bill two weeks ago. The measure must be passed by both houses of Congress and signed by President Bush before it becomes law.

The ban does not apply to online sales taxes, which are prohibited by a Supreme Court decision unless the retailer has a substantial presence in that state.

Many states, facing revenue crunches, have argued that the Internet is now a mature business like any other and should be taxed accordingly. But their appeals to allow online access or sales taxes have found little support this year.

Several high-tech trade groups praised the committee vote, as did two Bush administration officials who have been pushing to make the ban permanent.

"As policy makers, we need to encourage the roll-out of new Internet services and not stifle innovation by imposing new taxes," Treasury Secretary John Snow and Commerce Secretary Don Evans said in a joint statement.

Hormel Fights to Defend Spam Name

Hormel Foods has a message for a Seattle software company: Stop, in the name of Spam!

The canned-meat company filed two legal challenges with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to try to stop SpamArrest from using the decades-old name Spam, for which it holds the trademark.

SpamArrest, which specializes in blocking junk e-mail or "spam," filed papers to trademark its corporate name early this year. Hormel then sent the company a warning to drop the word "Spam." SpamArrest refused.

"If you ask most people on the street, they're going to say junk e-mail as opposed to the luncheon meat as their first description of what spam is. I think they're overstepping their bounds," said Brian Cartmell, SpamArrest's chief executive.

Cartmell says his company's use of the word has nothing to do with Hormel's product, first produced in 1937. Hormel officials disagree, arguing that the company has carefully protected and invested in the brand name, and that the public could confuse the meat product with the technology company. It filed its challenges in late June.

Hormel acknowledges that its brand name has taken on new meaning, and it outlines on its Web site what it considers acceptable uses of the word.

It says it doesn't object when "spam" is used to describe unsolicited commercial e-mail, but it does object when pictures of its product are used in association with the e-mail term.

Douglas Wood, who practices intellectual property law in New York, estimates Hormel has only a 50-50 chance of prevailing. He points to a recent case involving Victoria's Secret and a male adult novelty shop called Victor's Secret. Victoria's Secret sued, using the trademark infringement argument. But Wood says ultimately the company lost in court.

"The court in that case was saying, even though they may have a famous mark, Victoria's Secret, and may have a particular association as soon as you hear it, Victor's Secret was not enough - the confusion or potential damage to their mark - to constitute infringement," Wood said.

The case will be heard by the Trademark Trial and Appeals Court in Washington, D.C., probably next year.

SEC Probes AOL Tally Of Members For Padding

The Securities and Exchange Commission is investigating whether America Online Inc. improperly inflated its subscriber count through questionable practices ranging from the inclusion of hundreds of thousands of nonpaying customers on its membership rolls to the use of deeply discounted "bulk sales," sources familiar with the probe said yesterday.

Inside America Online’s Northern Virginia headquarters, employees were warned this week that the SEC wants them to retain, and not destroy, "hard copy and electronic documents, e-mail, and computer contents pertaining to bulk subscription arrangements, as well as any documents and other materials relating to the company’s practices, policies and procedures for counting subscribers," according to an e-mail from AOL’s legal department.

AOL Time Warner officials declined to comment yesterday.

The expansion of the SEC probe comes as federal investigators continue to examine America Online’s aggressive methods for reporting revenue, profit and advertising, before and after its merger with Time Warner Inc. in January 2001.

The SEC’s increased scrutiny follows two recent events: AOL Time Warner’s disclosure last week that America Online recently had purged more than 400,000 customers from its ranks who had been included in its subscriber numbers even though they were nonpaying, and a published report that the firm had used bulk sales to ramp up its subscriber count, sources said.

The nonpaying customers were counted even though they had been suspended for service violations such as spam or foul language, or because they failed to complete the process of signing up for AOL, sources said. They were not being billed for service.

Yesterday, Merrill Lynch & Co. analyst Jessica Reif Cohen said that shortcomings in America Online’s subscriber figures were being addressed as AOL Time Warner officials applied more rigorous internal standards. "As part of the broad restructuring of the AOL business segment...the company has provided increasingly detailed disclosure, including its subscriber count," Cohen wrote to investors.

The fresh SEC request for information from AOL also stems from a story in the Wall Street Journal last week disclosing the Internet firm’s use of bulk sales to jack up its subscriber count in 2000-2001. During that period, AOL increased its subscriber rolls by selling hundreds of thousands of cut-rate subscriptions to Sears, Roebuck and Co., Target Corp. and J.C. Penney Co., which in turn sold them to their own employees, sources said.

AOL added about 800,000 subscribers to its rolls during that period through the aggressive bulk sales, which it made reference to in its annual SEC disclosure in 2001. The initiative was born out of the company’s difficulty maintaining its base of about 25 million subscribers due to massive turnover each year.

The company’s churn of more than 40 percent of subscribers annually means that AOL must replace more than 10 million of its 25 million customers just to stay even, Wall Street sources said. The turnover is due in part to millions of people grabbing AOL software and signing up for free service for 45 days but failing to become paying customers.

At any given time, AOL counts millions of trial users as subscribers, even though they have not begun to pay. Yesterday, Merrill Lynch estimated that AOL has about 4 million trial subscribers included in its current membership count.

While AOL’s goal was to convert employees of Sears, Target and J.C. Penney into long-term users, the program failed to be an effective retention tool. But it had a big enough impact on the subscriber count in 2001 that America Online made a passing reference to it in an SEC filing, noting that a price

increase at the time was "partially offset by an increase in certain marketing programs designed to introduce the AOL service to new members, including...the sale of bulk subscriptions at a discounted rate to AOL's strategic partners for distribution to their employees."

AOL identified Sears, Target and J.C. Penney as partners because the giant retailers all aided in the distribution of America Online software to shoppers. Cohen said the bulk sales initiative did not affect the current subscriber count, which was down 840,000 in the second quarter, since most of those who had signed up "cycled out" by the end of 2002.

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